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Progress, with Caution

IN spite of its prolixity in seven typescript pages and some 3,600 words, the Speech read by His Honor at the opening of the B.C. Legislature contained a guarded outline of the program of the Social Credit administration for the coming fiscal year. In the light of the economic conditions of the times, the decision seems to be to go ahead with caution on pressing matters, and in some part to await the developments of the year before undertaking extensive commitments in any direction.

Thus, the Department of Health and Welfare, too large now for proper administration, is to be split in two, with the possible addition of one cabinet minister.

Additional provincial grants are to be given to B.C. school districts, to Victoria College, and to the University of British Columbia. Victoria City is promised its new courthouse, on the cabinet's honor, with construction unequivocally to start this year. The government will name a standing committee of the House to deal with unemployment.

Applying more generally throughout the province, additional judges are to be named to the Supreme Court, as urged by both bench and bar. Land clearing is to be facilitated in connection with settlement farms. Logging machinery may be co-opted to fight forest fires in emergencies. The administration proposes the creation of a horse-racing commission. "Douglas Day" is to be established on Nov. 19 annually, as the last step of the highly successful Centennial Year.

There is no hint in the Speech of altered taxation, nor of any crucial change in the present forms of revenue collection. An important paragraph pledges extension of education and training for mentally retarded children, a move that has long been popularly urged. For the rest, the administration's pronouncement indulged in what amounts to a stage by stage recital of the unusual events of the Centennial Year. It notes, with pleasure, that Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip will be the first official guests to be received at the new Government House after it is completed this year.

After three years of deferred action, and many on and off the cuff promises, it will be a pleasure to Victoria citizens to read the reference to the courthouse. It states, and we quote: "Construction of a new courthouse in the capital city of this Province will be commenced this year." That is for the record.

Searchlight on Education

WHEN the provincial royal commission on the public school curriculum convened in Victoria yesterday its three members found no dearth of material for study. About a score of briefs had been compiled for presentation by individuals and diverse organizations, through which the Chant commission will have a cross-section view of public opinion on the quality of what is taught and how it is taught at elementary and high school levels.

Not only in British Columbia but throughout Canada (Alberta has had a similar commission at work for several months) the public school curriculum is one of the most controversial topics of the day. From time immemorial it has been customary for people to find fault with the upbringing of children in general and with the schools in particular. Since the adoption of courses and methods of instruction supposed to make education both attractive and easy the volume of complaint has had more voices added to it, to include the universities, the professions, industry and business, the trades, municipal councils and even in some instances the police. Added to this is the angry outcry of taxpayers who feel that the product of the modern education system is not worth the enormous cost.

The system may or may not be as bad as it is portrayed, but obviously there are things seriously wrong with it. The job of the Chant commission is to find out what they are and how they might be corrected. Because of the vital importance of this investigation not only to the students and the home but also to the whole economic structure of the province and the country, it is heartening to see the active interest which is being taken in the commission's hearings.

The curriculum is the sole responsibility of the provincial department, and the government has rendered British Columbia good service in submitting this issue to the scrutiny of independent experts. The commission in turn has manifested zeal for facts and opinions suggesting that the investigation when completed will have overlooked nothing that might be relevant to its findings.

Spoiling Craigdarroch

IT would be a mistake to erect an overflow building in the grounds of Craigdarroch Castle. For one thing the school board is not likely to keep its offices there indefinitely, since the castle is not well suited to this purpose anyway and it is rather out of the way for easy approach. Erection of a $75,000 adjunct would be a waste of money that can ill be spared, and the structure would have to be torn down again when the board moved. Events are moving slowly but inevitably towards the creation of a civic centre of some sort offering full administrative facilities, and the school board would be wise to make some other temporary adjustment in the meantime.

More importantly the castle area should not be spoiled for what could be its future appropriate use. Craigdarroch is one of the few buildings extant that genuinely connect with the early history of Victoria, and it is admirably suited for transformation into a civic museum. That might come about unless the chance is lost. The city is short of authentic tourist attractions, and even now the castle is a landmark that arrests attention and arouses the interest of visitors. That interest would be tripled were it furbished as a show piece containing relics and items of historical value. The city has the power to prevent the spoilation of Craigdarroch; it should use it.

Interpreting the News

Visit's Result Awaited

By JOHN M. HIGHTOWER

(Associated Press Correspondent)

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. government may take months to appraise what Anastas Mikoyan did to the United States. It hopes to know in about two weeks what the United States did to Mikoyan.

The Russian deputy premier left Washington Tuesday on his trip back to Moscow. Ostensibly, he was on a holiday and wanted to see what changes had taken place since his last U.S. visit two decades ago.

At the state department one hears most frequently a guess about Mikoyan's main purpose. As one U.S. official summed it up, he wanted "to take our temperature on Berlin."

* * *

President Eisenhower and State Secretary Dulles are hopeful that Mikoyan will try to impress on Premier Nikita Khrushchev that the United States is determined not to back down over Berlin. They hope Mikoyan was convinced that if Russia and East Germany press the issue of Western withdrawal too far they will have an extremely dangerous situation on their hands.

The impact made on Moscow by Mikoyan's travels and observations may become clear first of all.

The Soviet Communist party's 21st congress is due to begin Jan. 27. Mikoyan is expected to make a major speech.

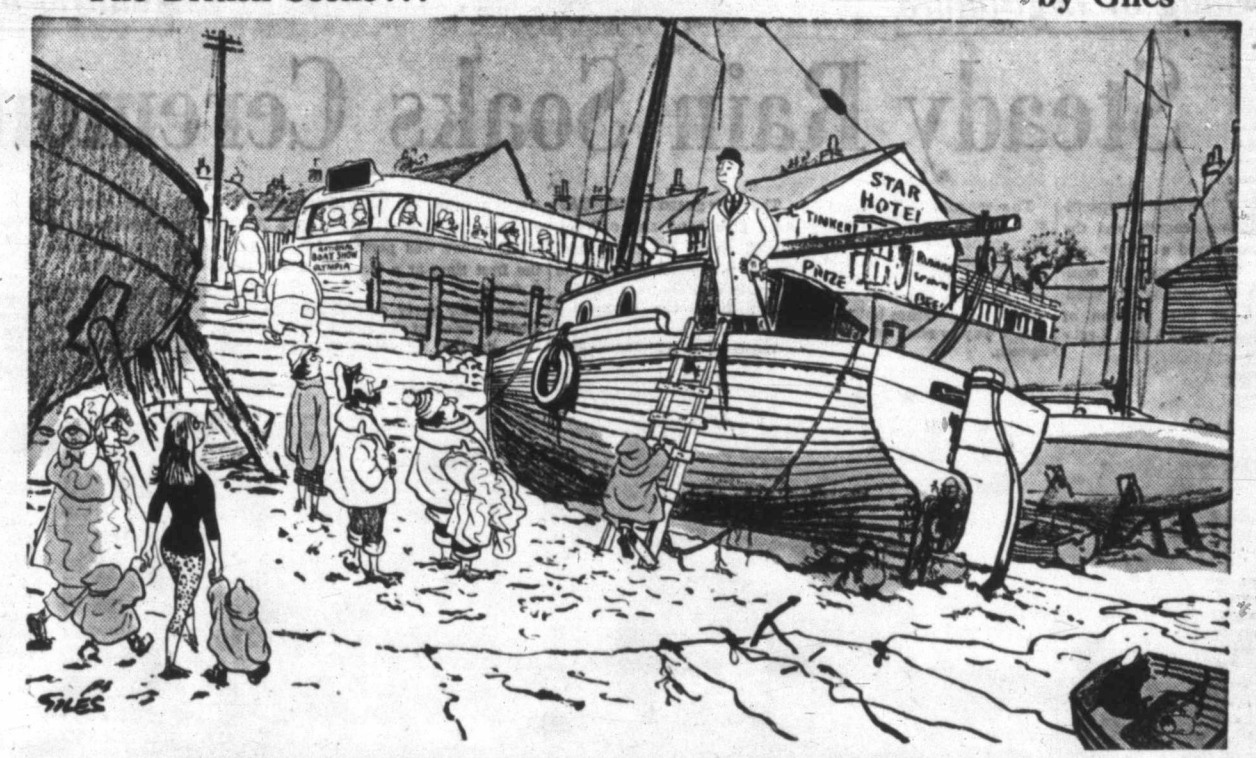
It most likely will reflect his views about the United States and relate much that he saw here. Also, what Khrushchev tells the congress may well show whether Mikoyan's report had any effect on Berlin policy.

* * *

Beyond this, the tone of the whole congress should provide evidence as to whether the Soviet government is prepared to follow up Mikoyan's goodwill tour with specific new proposals for improving relations.

Khrushchev needs large quantities of machinery to build up his plastics and chemical industries. He would like to get much of this machinery from the United States. That was undoubtedly a factor in Mikoyan's constant demand for expanded U.S.-Soviet trade.

The British Scene... by Giles



"Philip! You're not going to the show like that—Go and get dressed at once."

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

THERE is some comfort in being an old soldier instead of a new one; at least the former could fire his last bullet at the enemy and then go home without fear of aftermath.

The latter may not, in future.

This deduction at least might be drawn from the legal status of weapons in war. The United States field manual assures its soldiers that the use of nuclear weapons is okay, all serene and aboveboard, whereas the British soldier hasn't any such clear guide. His manual refers him evasively from one section of international law to another.

How the Canadian manual rules on this fine point of wartime ethics I don't know.

I fancy that in the front line all three will do as they're told and pull the trigger or release the warhead, as the case may be. When the enemy's coming at you there's no time for argument about the niceties of weapons, none of which, anyway, are really what you'd call nice.

* * *

It's the aftermath that's the bother, though. If in future a soldier happens to be on the losing side he's apt to be hauled up by the victor, none too gently either, and indicted for using an improper weapon.

A lot will depend, you see, on the viewpoint of the victor. He might not agree that use of the warhead was legitimate practice. A soldier therefore becomes a potential object of enemy war crimes trials.

This is the result of Nuremberg, which as some far-seeing folk pointed out at the time, could be a boomerang. Probably all the accused there got what was coming to them, nevertheless new international law was created and back-dated.

That, naturally, was a risky precedent, and already we have Dr. Castro excusing his executions by citing the example of Nuremberg.

It had never before been an international offence for commanders-in-chief or military staffs or industrial barons, for instance, to promote national aggrandisement, or even plot a war. National leaders had been doing that for centuries, including those of the judges at Nuremberg, although perhaps not so nasty-like in their case.

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But you see what a poser this is for the next war. It's not everyone that will be able to hedge his bets, as it were, like Alfred Krupp. He's said to be buying into Canadian industry, so presumably in the event of any future war between Canada and Germany he can't lose. He'll be on both sides, industrially, and so in the clear.

Not so, however, the poor soldier. There's no telling where the gamut of "war crimes" trials could end; it might run down all the way to the newest private, who, under the eagle eye of his sergeant, fired a warhead.

There must be something in this, too, else a military manual wouldn't go out of its way to assure soldiers their weapons were ethically beyond reproach.

It's a dilemma for the trooper, all right. If he doesn't obey and let go the warhead he'll be on the spot for mutiny in face of the enemy; perhaps shot for his scruples. If he lets it go and the enemy wins he runs the risk of being on the spot for obeying orders; perhaps shot for not having scruples.

Ah well, there's a consoling thought for the soldier. If as they say one fired nuclear warhead will usher in a nuclear war and there will be nobody left when it's all over, obviously there will be no war-crimes trials.

Letter from London

Malta Situation Clumsily Handled

By RICHARD L. THOMAS

NO one in Britain is very happy about Mr. Lennox Boyd's handling of Malta. It would seem that even the Colonial Office has its reservations, yet no one seems to be able to suggest a practicable alternative. The main trouble seems to be that Mr. Lennox Boyd insists on handling Malta as a business proposition, and most people would be happier if there was a little less business and a little more humanity.

Mr. Dom Mintoff is a difficult customer to deal with—how difficult may be gathered from the fact that a year or so ago he was campaigning for integration with the United Kingdom and today he is demanding independence. He sees in Mr. Lennox Boyd a modern manifestation of the Victorian colonial secretary, the austere father who believes in the rod rather than in explaining adult behavior to children.

* * *

In fact, of course, both Mr. Mintoff and Mr. Lennox Boyd are rather old-fashioned, Mr. Mintoff cannot believe that Malta is no longer of vital strategic importance in the atomic age, and Mr. Lennox Boyd cannot understand the idea that a handful of people on a speck of earth in the Mediterranean can really be serious about their place in the world. There is an element of irresponsibility on both sides, and even the most ardent supporters of the government are afraid that too much sticking to guns and principles may turn Malta into another Cyprus.

The Colonial Office poo-poohs the idea. The Maltese are charming people. Mr. Mintoff may be an extremist but even he does not believe in violence. It is true that things are difficult in Malta but mother knows best. What the Colonial Office does not even yet seem to realize is that awkward situations have a habit of getting out of hand.

Mr. Mintoff is quite definitely an advocate of passive resistance, but some of his henchmen may not be. Then the time comes when he has to decide if he supports the violence of extremist supporters or the British government, and in such circumstances it may well happen that the supporters of whom he disapproves will get support in preference to the government of which he disapproves still more.

* * *

And Malta more than any other colony deserves special consideration. It did not get its George Cross for nothing. We can afford to be a little sentimental about it and many people feel that we should have leaned over backwards rather than allow the impossible situation to arise which has now arisen. Whatever Mr. Boyd may argue we have in fact imposed outside authority on the island against the wishes of the majority of the people. We have handled the closing of the Malta dockyard very clumsily. We announced its closing—with all the consequent fears and apprehension in Malta—before we announced the efforts to replace it with a civilian dockyard to make good the lost employment. It was psychologically the wrong way to go about it. There would have been nothing unreasonable in the Admiralty guaranteeing employment until the civilian firm had taken over.

It would not perhaps have been strict business. It might have cost the British taxpayer a few shillings a head, but it would have earned the goodwill of the Maltese. After all it was a British dockyard, and the change could have been effected gradually and almost imperceptibly, but for some reason the government decided to use a sledge hammer and start off on the wrong foot by what one Maltese told me they regard as a "conditioning process"—the creation of a fear which would make subsequent efforts appear to be kind and generous.

There is no disguising the fact that Britain gave Malta a decided shock by announcing the closure of the dockyard with a generalized promise to do what they could about it.

Malta deserved better than that. Many people here believe that she deserved what she asked for—integration with Britain — which the government refused largely on the grounds that it would cost quite a deal to give them all the benefits of the welfare state and that presence of a couple of Maltese members in the parliament of Westminster could be a trifle embarrassing.

* * *

There is more than a suspicion that the real problem which integration would not have solved was Mr. Mintoff himself. It is suggested that if Mr. Mintoff would get out of Maltese politics a solution would soon be found. There is probably an element of truth in this. No one likes a person who parades his virtues or puts a cash value on suffering—but equally no one likes a person who seemingly overlooks special circumstances. Malta cannot eat its George Cross.

And very few people in Britain approve what is now happening in Malta — the suppression of newspapers, the imprisonment of editors and the institution of one-man government. The governor is no doubt an estimable gentleman but he can make mistakes. The editor concerned may well have deserved his sentence of imprisonment but the fact remains that many people interpret it as an act of oppression and many quite balanced people prefer dangerously irresponsible expressions of opinion to dictatorship.

Mr. Lennox Boyd's administration of the Colonial Office has not been distinctive or imaginative. It is obvious that everything he thinks about Mr. Mintoff is reciprocated by the former Maltese premier. In such circumstances it would be better if Mr. Macmillan appointed an independent arbiter or better still a Commonwealth commission. If an independent Briton, Canadian and Australian got together to solve the Malta problem it could be done. There is still a strong element of goodwill on both sides and the time for the commission is before that element is dissipated by high-handed actions from Whitehall too often hidebound by Victorian precedents, or by irresponsibility in Malta encouraged by subversive elements who specialize in making trouble worse confounded.

Canadian Welfarism

What Can We Afford?

(From The Financial Times)

CANADIANS have, in the proud boast of their political representatives, one of the most comprehensive state welfare programs in the world. Close to half of the federal budget is committed to this objective. Because so much of welfarism is universal — one need only have children to have a family allowance, need only be 70 years to have the old-age pension — its cost must continue to rise as the population increases.

The general assumption is that increased costs of welfarism rising from increased population are supported by the increased potential for tax revenues. Growth, in other words, will be self-supporting. In practice, of course, it does not work out that way —not, at least, in times of recession. Welfare payments are still being made but the tax potential has been drastically reduced by a lower level of corporation earnings and by unemployment.

These considerations, however, beg the basic question inherent in the extent of welfarism in Canada — the question as to whether we can afford it. The question has been raised with varying degrees of concern ever since the family allowance, first of the transfer payments, was initiated at the end of the war.

It is a question that is particularly pertinent now in view of the prospects for another budget deficit of the same proportions as the current one.

About half the increase in disposable income in Canada of $1,300,000,000 is derived from welfare payments. It is coincidental that this contribution to disposable income should be so close to the forecast budget deficit. It is coincidental, too, that it should also be so close to the rise in personal savings on deposit in the chartered banks. But these coincidences do help emphasize the basic consideration: that fixed payment welfarism, in times of recession, contributes to the budget deficit while permitting increased personal savings by the recipients.

A country whose income is still as dependent upon the sale of raw and semi-processed resources as is Canada's has no business matching welfarism with more developed countries with superior rates of productivity. While the economy was expanding as fast as it was through the 1950s, this fact was obscured. Now, however, with expansion slowed, it has emerged in the form of continuing deficits with their attendant inflation.

In effect, Canadians are learning that they can afford to maintain welfarism only by inflating their currency.

The Packsack

By GREGORY CLARK

THE top brass of the labor movement have lately been concerning themselves with scholarly reflection on the question of leisure. If the four-and-a-half-day week is soon to become the three-day week, and so on, what are people going to do with their spare time?

It is no laughing matter.

Our conception of leisure is largely formed by the lovely color pictures to be seen in the magazines and on travel posters showing vast throngs of happy and wealthy people disporting themselves on ocean beaches in the palm-fringed sunny south. Another form of leisure is portrayed in the figure of a happy man operating a buzz saw in his cellar while his wife sits admiring by. Fishing, or whizzing about in a pink boat with a blue outboard motor; camping amid stately mountains with a tent, a portable freezer, a portable TV and a portable propane stove; playing an organ which you can learn in six easy lessons; or just reclining, with a fat smile, in a hammock.

But I happen to be related to three or four members of the laboring class who have achieved the four-and-a-half-day week with handsome wages. And do you know what they do with their leisure?

They get sideline jobs.

Nothing more tiresome than leisure, after a few tries at it.